# Motherhood vs. The Good ol' Boys Club

The early 1980's offered more opportunities for women in the workplace. The political impact of the 1970's NOW (National Organization of Women) movement had created many open doors for me. Here I am, 28 years old, newly married and the flight commander for Delta Flight Security Police at Travis AFB, CA.

George had not fared well in his training as an aircraft navigator at Mather AFB. He failed a few tests, then during parachute training George was injured, when a tether rope was prematurely disengaged from a tow vehicle. He took a nasty crash onto his upper back. He eventually earned a 10% medical disability for that injury.

I helped him draft a letter of 'resignation' from that career field, and we made him sound eager and willing to continue with the Air Force. He was reassigned as a missilier. The training was not as glamorous, but it kept George grounded. Literally. He was sent TDY (temporary duty) to Vandenberg AFB near Lompoc, California, while I stayed at Travis AFB near Sacramento. After 1Lt George Weil graduated, he was assigned to F.E. Warren AFB in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The 90th Missile Wing commanded over 150 Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), that were deployed over Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. George spent the next couple of years underground as our nation's first line of defense.

Anticipating a joint spouse assignment, George and I took leave from our respective duties to shop for our first home in Cheyenne, Wyoming. We drove the poor realty lady ragged looking at properties. A house I thought was fine was rejected because George thought the lawn was too lumpy. Houses George liked were too rich for our pockets. Finally, we both agreed on a 2-story, split level corner property. It was on a main road at the far end of town. 4523 Huron Ave. We paid 69K for it and after closing we celebrated!

Returning to my security police duties at Travis, I oversaw the packing of our meager household goods from the Fairfield apartment. The military would pack and move us several times over the course of our military career. I bunked with another female officer who had a nice home on the edge of a golf course. Before long, that calming glass of wine after work upset my stomach…..I was pregnant!

*I never envisioned having kids – they were alien, scary and messy. Yet I continue to evolve.*

Considering the super macho work I was doing, the stigma of motherhood continued to evoke masculine malcontent. George developed a nasty attitude pertaining to my job as a security police shift commander, and once the promise of a little Weil became evident, I was put out of that job in record time. My security flight was sad to see me go. I was sequestered within the Base Commander's office as an Executive Officer, until my joint spouse orders came through for F.E. Warren AFB.

With the proper paperwork in hand, I packed what little wasn't shipped to Cheyenne already, into the car George left for me. The 1972 GMC Javelin muscle car had 8-cyclinders and earned the name "lead sled" during the vicious Wyoming winters. I endured horrendous ribbing from my security flight when they caught sight of the license plate holder, which read – 'Sit on a Happy Face.'

The Lead Sled was a powerful, persnickety piece of scrap. During my solo trip over the Sierra's on my way to Cheyenne, the starter gave out. Totally out of my element, (*Dad never appreciated my efforts to diagnose car trouble*), I found myself with a dead car at a gas station somewhere on Interstate 80. The resident mechanic took pity on me. He raised the hood of the Javelin, told me to turn the key in the ignition, then come back up in front of the car. He took an old wood handle rat tail file and showed me where to position it to make the electrical connection the starter wouldn't do. VERROOMMM!!! The Javelin roared to life. I thanked the mechanic profusely and continued my way to Cheyenne. I was quite a site with my pregnant self as I stopped to fill the gas tank along the way. As soon as I finished filling the tank, I'd lift the hood – which became an instant testosterone beacon. No sooner did a guy peek around the open hood to ask, "Can I hel…" VERROOMMM !!! Letting the hood slam shut, I'd smile sweetly, "Thanks, I got it." So, the baby and I made it to Cheyenne in one piece.

Two newly married lieutenants arrive at F.E. Warren and join the 'Mighty Ninety'. George settles in with the missilier squadron, and I was assigned as executive officer to 90th OMMS (Operational Missile Maintenance Squadron). The squadron was run by the well-respected LtCol McCoy. His 'Tiger Team' worked their butts off for him, earning high performance reports whenever SMES (SAC Missile Evaluation Squadron) came calling. LtCol McCoy was promoted and reassigned as Vice Wing Commander of the 'Mighty Ninety'. Everyone sincerely missed him, especially me. During the 90th OMMS change of command we were introduced to another rising star in the good ol' boys club – LtCol Roscoe E. Moulthrop.

Meanwhile, 1Lt George E. Weil, as a missilier, was often required to spend overnight at the bottom of a Minute Man missile silo. During one of his overnight tours, I came home to find the basement very wet from a leaking washing machine. Sheer stupidity allowed my 8- month pregnant self to shove our 300 lb. roll-top desk around, so I could pull up the carpet to dry.

We settled into home life and utilized the technology available to us. It was 1985 and the telephone was still attached to the wall with a curly cord. We played games like Frogger, PONG, Pac-Man and Tetras, on a new-fangled computer. We often went to a video store (Blockbuster) to rent a VHS player and cassette movies to keep George happy.

Even though I moved less like a gazelle and more like a hippo, I was at work in the 90th OMMS Orderly Room right up to my due date. By Friday I was past ready to get off my feet for a while. Sure enough, Saturday morning, March 23rd, I felt some odd twinges. I ate a light breakfast and kept track of the contractions. By noon they were regular enough to get started for the base hospital. Being my first (and only) child, I was anxious and a bit hyper – but not George! On our way to the hospital, he calmly says, "*I need to drop off the VHS first.*" I sat fuming in the car outside Blockbuster Video, hoping my water would break just to make a point.

I was admitted and spent a couple of hours walking up and down the corridors, pulling an IV pole. By late afternoon my obstetrician declared it's time to get things going. Once the cushion of water was pierced and gave way, those tickling twinges became vice-like crushes! If I led my doctor to believe I would go for a natural childbirth, it was rescinded in the ensuing panic I felt. DRUGS? Yes! Epidural? Only the waist down? HELL – KNOCK ME OUT!!!

I remember a lot of yelling. The nurse assisting this 'blessed' event was hollering in my ear to PUSH! George was behind my head, not wishing to get any closer to the action. Pretty soon, at 6:48p.m., the yelling turned into squalling as our dark-haired daughter Crystal announced her arrival.

Yep – alien, scary and messy. "*Honey, I'm starving! Bring me a BIG MAC!*"

'Crystal' by the way, was suggested by George as a girl's name. I don't recall what we picked out as a boy's name. Crystal Carrington was a popular character on 'Dallas' at the time. Also, more to George's liking was country western singer Crystal Gale. My efforts to honor my favorite feline heroine 'Elsa' from the movie 'Born Free' was countered with a resounding – NO!

Suddenly, I became a mother, on top of being an officer and wife. My plate was full. I cleaned up well, cut my hair, bought a sleeker military hat and charged back to work. Poor little Crystal was carted off to 'Grandma's Infant Daycare'. The military wants you back to work after 6 weeks... however, no commercial daycare providers would take a child younger than 6 months. We missed Crystal's first steps, endured the awful smell of cigarette smoke on her when we picked her up from 'Grandma's', and still struggled with caring for her on weekends when we both had to work.

My executive job with 90th OMMS turned into a head-butting exercise with LtCol Moulthrop. I oversaw the Orderly Room, with all the filing, administrative functions and general reports needed to keep the squadron running smoothly. LtCol Moulthrop was expecting the I.G. (Inspector General) visit and demanded his office and secretary's room be painted before the inspection. I was more concerned that my orderly room people fix several deficiencies identified by the local base inspection.

During one staff meeting with other officers and section heads, LtCol Moulthrop was all about image and attitude. Don't say, '*I'm going down to OMMS,*' say, *'I'm going up to OMMS!*' Sure enough, as he continued his instructions for my orderly room to paint his office, I continued to defend my men's better use. Moulthrop growled, '*I don't want the IG coming down here to*…', *'You mean up here*…' I interjected strongly. I caught a few puckered smiles from my peers, but the scowl on the colonel's face meant – grab a brush!

So, for a couple of weekends before the IG was due, I'm standing on a chair to reach the ceiling of Moulthrop's office with a paint roller. My orderly room crew was painting the hallway. Poor little Crystal is breathing more bad fumes, as she watches me from her travel carrier I had placed on the office couch.

As predicted, the colonel's office looked grand for the inspection, but the OMMS Orderly Room took several big hits and failed. I expect this was all calculated to justify the sudden drop in my next Officer Performance Report (OPR). It didn't take much for the review board to hold back candidates and deny promotion to the next rank.

My misery did not go unnoticed. At one mandatory mixer I was greeted by my earlier boss from OMMS, Col McCoy. As he asked how it was going, I made an off-handed comment that I'd really like to be on the Group (or base) side. I was presently under the Wing Command. With a couple of poor officer evaluations on my record, I was not long for this man's world.

The base commander sincerely offered to override this 'kiss of death' to an officer's career. They knew I'd be facing forced retirement. Col McCoy and the base commander could see I was fighting a losing battle with Moulthrop and offered me a transfer to the Billeting office on the Group side of the Mighty Ninety. I took the move gladly and continued to prove my worth as an officer – not just a new mother who 'was distracted from her duty.'

Staff meetings on the base level were more civilized. I was tasked to investigate the destruction of government property in a dormitory dayroom. Apparently, an airman was playing on a pool table and ripped a large hole in the felt. Pretty cut and dry. Charge the airman with negligence and he'd pay to repair the damages. But no! 1Lt Weil finds divots under the felt. Screw holes that were never filled in before the felt was installed. My report reflected this oversight, and the airman escaped having to pay for repairs. (*Dad would have been proud of me. Who knew the 'Jewel' he drug home from Utah had taught me a thing or two*!)

Another 'duh' moment occurred during another staff meeting. I listened to the Base Engineer officer lament the traffic problems around the Base Exchange parking lot. Traffic kept entering the one-way driveway despite the posted traffic sign. I took a break from my notes, looked at them in disbelief and asked simply, "*Why don't you turn the sign so oncoming traffic can see it BEFORE they turn into the driveway*?" The blank looks on their faces from around the table were priceless. Within the week the signs were turned and the problem solved.

Even with a couple of glowing OPRs after the OMMS debacle, it was not enough to keep me from being passed over for promotion. That eventually forced my retirement after 4 years of commissioned service. This was still a men's club.

Grudgingly, I took the $10,000 severance pay and skipped all the way to the bank.